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Message to Southern Cross Newspaper

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11th October, 1967.

MESSAGE FROM THE PREMIER OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA, HON. DON DUNSTAN,
Q.C., M.P., FOR "THE SOUTHERN CROSS" NEWSPAPER.

I am very grateful to the churches for their assistance to me in the matter of Sunday entertainment.

As I pointed out in my letter to Bishop Reed which he passed on to all churches, the loopholes in the present Places of Public Entertainment Act are so great that unless action is taken during this year, the situation by next year will be completely out of hand and uncontrolled. Moreover, the loopholes being used to evade the present law are allowing entertainments to take place in places where packed crowds can be subjected to the gravest of hazards to their safety from fire risk. The letter which I sent to the churches was thus written at the beginning of this session of Parliament in order to give them time to consider the matter and make submissions in time for the necessary and urgent action to be taken this session.

Three of the churches, the Baptist Union, the Churches of Christ, and the Lutheran Church, considered that there should be no alteration in the present situation. Regrettably, they have not turned their attention to the fact disclosed in my letter that already there is widespread activity on Sundays which is not controlled and about which a decision must be made. It is extremely unlikely that we can cut across what have become established community customs, with success. For the rest, it is quite apparent that the majority of churches are either in favor of or resigned to an alteration in the law so that the decisions of the recent Royal Commission on Sunday Observance in Tasmania are given effect to here 'though with some minor modifications advocated in two instances. The Government is in consequence examining an amendment to the law along those lines to give effect to what is apparently the overwhelming majority opinion of the churches.

There are two other submissions, however, which specifically call for comment. The first of these is that public transport should be made more available on Sundays. Given the present finances of the Municipal Tramways Trust, I do not foresee that it is at all likely that we could extend public transport services to Sunday morning work. If we were to do so, it would be necessary to provide 'buses for all services on Sunday mornings, and on present indicated demand this would be plainly uneconomic, and monies would have to be found for a substantial deficit for the Municipal Tramways Trust, which would be achieved only by increases in taxation. Secondly, the Churches of Christ and the Anglican Diocese of Willochra both suggested that the matter of Sunday activity should be submitted

to referendum. Only simple questions capable of a "Yes" or "No" answer can be submitted to referendum. When there is a complicated proposition involving provisions for numbers of different kinds of activity, a referendum cannot express clear conclusion because there is no simple proposition to put. In consequence, the alterations in the law suggested by the majority of churches are not capable of submission to referendum and must be dealt with simply on a Bill introduced to Parliament. However, the Government was determined that before a Bill was submitted to Parliament, due knowledge of the problem should be communicated to church leaders and their views sought. In fact, church leaders have had from the middle of June until the end of September to consider the matter and communicate their views to the Government, which they have done and I am very grateful for their assistance.